Revised Offer on Basic Telecom

5303. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether International Telecommunication Union has urged India to place its revised offer on basic telecom services to the World Trade Organisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) In view of above question does not arise.

Production of Large Digital Exchange

5304. SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether C-DOT has made a significant breakthrough in production of first ever larger digital exchange Main Auto Exchange MAX (XL) with indigenous technology to replace requirements of trunk automatic exchanges (tax);

(b) if so, the details of the plans of production of MAX (XL) during 1997-98;

(c) the details of expenditure on import of such exchanges during the last three years and details of plans for manufacturing the exchanges indigenously—order of investment during 1997-98; and

(d) the requirement of such exchanges over the next 5 years plans to meet the requirement through indigenous technology?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The orders to supply 107.5 KL C DOT MAX-XL equipment has been placed on ITI for supply during 97-98.

(c) Expenditure on import—Nil.

For indigenous order, kindly see para above.

(d) The requirement for large exchanges for 9th Five Year Plan is expected to be 17 million lines.

Diamond Mines

5305. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Diamond mines in the country; State-wise;

(b) the extent of diamond reserves in those mines, State-wise; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government for exploration of Diamond mines?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) As per information available, there are two diamond mines in the Country and both of them are in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh.

(b) As per information available, recoverable reserves of diamond as on 1.4.1994 are 1065,000 carats of which 929,000 carats fall in proved category and 1,36,000 carats fall in possible category.

(c) The Geological Survey of India has given main thrust during the 9th Five Year Plan for mineral exploration with special emphasis on deficient commodities including diamond. Presently GSI is carrying out exploration for diamond in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and Bihar. In line with National Mineral Policy, 1993, thirteen minerals including diamond, hitherto reserved for exploitation under the public sector, have been thrown open for exploration and exploitation under private sector. The policy prescription envisages induction of foreign technology and foreign participation in exploration and mining for high value and scarce minerals. The Policy prescription also envisages foreign equity participation in joint ventures in mining promotion by Indian companies to be encouraged. While the foreign investment in equity would normally be limited to 50%, this limitation would not apply to the captive mines of any mineral processing industry. Enhanced equity participation can also be considered on case to case basis. Further, the Govt. has also issued guidelines for grant of large areas for aerial prospecting with a view to facilitate larger investments in exploration.

Arrangement to Carry Dead Bodies

5306. SHRI E. AHAMED: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are requests/appeals from Indian Community living in the Gulf Countries to arrange to carry the dead Bodies of Indian Nationals from these countries to India by Indian Airlines flights free of cost; and

(b) if so, the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Indian Airlines has been advised to provide free carriage of dead bodies of Indian nationals dying in UAE, in cases of extreme compassion.

Modernisation of BALCO

5307. SHRI HARADHAN ROY: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any steps for revamping/modernisation of Foil Plant at Bidhanbag Unit of BALCO; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd. (BALCO) is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing Company and the